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ABSTRACT

The educational establishment is under a great deal of pressure to improve and to prove to its critics that it has done so. This paper develops three concepts to support its thesis: effective schools, the change process, and outcomes-based education (OBE). To achieve effective schools, major change must take place. Yet change is not easy for schools. The changes that occur in schools must be accomplished in such a way that the public and the critics are provided the information to judge success. We support the notion that OBE is an excellent tool to provide this information. Recently, the National Study for School Evaluation (NSSE) developed an OBE school evaluation model, which was written by representatives from most of the regional accrediting associations. To effectively implement the NSSE model, this paper supports the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) as a philosophical and organizational framework. The "Profound Knowledge" necessary for organizational management as expressed by W. Edwards Deming is discussed, and the steps used in the NSSE model are presented and matched to TQM concepts. (Contains 16 references.) (Author)

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Total Quality Management as a Philosophical and Organizational Framework to Achieve Outcomes-Based Education and Effective Schools

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Total Quality Management as a Philosophical and Organizational Framework to Achieve Outcomes-Based Education and Effective Schools

Abstract

The educational establishment is under a great deal of pressure to improve and to prove to its critics that it has done so. This paper develops three concepts to support its thesis: effective schools, the change process, and outcomes-based education (OBE). To achieve effective schools, major change must take place. Yet change is not easy for schools. The changes that occur in schools must be accomplished in such a way that the public and the critics are provided the information to judge success. We support the notion that OBE is an excellent tool to provide this information. Recently, the National Study for School Evaluation (NSSE) developed an OBE school evaluation model, which was written by representatives from most of the regional accrediting associations. To effectively implement the NSSE model, this paper supports the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) as a philosophical and organizational framework. The "Profound Knowledge" necessary for organizational management as expressed by W. Edwards Deming is discussed, and the steps used in the NSSE model are presented and matched to TQM concepts.

Total Quality Management as a Philosophical and Organizational Framework to Achieve Outcomes-Based Education and Effective Schools

Is Total Quality Management (TQM) yet another change that has been thrust upon the schools by outside reformers in an attempt to reform the education system. To meet the ever-growing criticism of education, are educators using TQM to show that schools themselves are reforming from within? Or, is it a change that began from linkages among business leaders, educators, the major professional administrator and teacher associations, and change agents that has such face validity to meet the needs of our educational system and satisfy the critics of schools, its use in schools has been quickly growing. This paper supports the latter thesis. It also supports the thesis that TQM could be *the* change that will provide the administrative philosophy and organization structure within which radical curricular restructure will be possible.

Schools have always been under fire to improve the quality of their products, particularly since the early 1980's after the publication of the now infamous *A Nation at Risk* report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report and others *(Time for Change, Academic Preparation for College, Educating Americans for the 21st Century, and Action for Excellence*) which tended to base their conclusions on perceptions rather than fact, nonetheless had a great impact on the public perception of schools. Are schools really as bad as these reports professed? Bracey (1991; 1992; 1993) provided excellent rebuttals to these reports' conclusions. His articles contain detailed information providing evidence that schools are, in fact, producing better products than they were previously, or at least show that education in the United States is not in shambles when compared with other nations. Concerning *A Nation at Risk*, he stated that it

> . . . launched a crusade for school reform by claiming that America was drowning in "a rising tide of mediocrity." *There is no such tide.* Those who penned this document were sometimes merely naive in their interpretations, but at other times they verged on being criminally uncritical about the misinformation they were fed. (1991, p. 110)

It is not the intent of this paper to review the details of this debate, suffice it to say that Bracey provides supporting data that reveal schools have in fact been improving their output, not the reverse.

However, regardless of whether or not schools are actually in a state of decline, the public perception is that schools in the United States are doing a poor job—not the schools where their kids go, but "other" schools. The annual Gallup polls commissioned by Phi Delta Kappa continues to show that although the public is essentially very positive about the schools their own children attend and somewhat less positive, but nonetheless positive, about their local school district in general, they believe that schools across the United States are not educating the youth of this nation very well. Also, we continue to hear business and government leaders lament the job that schools are doing to prepare kids to enter the workforce. These perceptions have a great effect on the business of education, not the least of which is a negative attitude

on the part of the taxpayers to continue to increase education funding at all levels of government. If schools are continuing to improve as Bracey has been able to demonstrate, then why does the public perceive schools as failing. Perhaps the debate should not be about increases or deceases in test scores or how student achievement in the United States compares to students from other developed nations. To judge our nation's education system by such limited methods has received much criticism lately, and there seems to be a growing consensus that other forms of assessment are necessary. Perhaps the debate, then, should focus on alternative measures of assessment, and whether or not schools have implemented the improvements necessary to prepare students for a changed society.

Change is inevitable and necessary for schools to insure continual improvement in meeting the demands of a changing society. There is a wealth of research under the name of "Effective Schools Research" that indicates to schools the characteristics they must acquire to improve. (For some earlier effective schools research see Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer & Wisenbaker, 1979; Brookover, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985; and Purkey & Smith, 1983. More recently see Levine and Lezotte, 1990). These studies have shown schools how they must change to more become more effective. In brief, they indicate that schools must: establish a clear mission, have administration and staff that focus on instruction, continually monitor student progress, have high expectations of student achievement, provide staff development, involve stakeholders in decisions, encourage parental support and involvement, and have a safe and orderly environment. However, just showing the public that these characteristics are present is not sufficient. With a focus on accountability (meaning test scores to most people), schools must show that specific outcomes have been achieved. Therefore, in recent years there has been a focus on what has been dubbed Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). OBE seeks to develop alternative outcomes as tools in establishing a framework of accountability and to help establish programs that will focus on the desired outcomes. The discussions about OBE have culminated in an evaluation model developed by the National Study for School Evaluation (NSSE), which publishes the material used by the regional accrediting agencies in school evaluation. The OBE model developed by NSSE, published under the title of *Elementary School Improvement: Focusing on Desired Learner Outcomes*, was written by a team representing all regional accrediting associations except one, the New England Association of School and Colleges (National Study of School Evaluation, 1992).

We know the characteristics of effective schools and we know that a focus on outcomes should drive our programs and be the accountability tool to the public. We know where we should be going, but do we know how to get there? Unfortunately, schools are notoriously bad at change, because the norms of school culture are difficult to change. To get there, then, the following questions must be answered: (a) How can schools effectively attack the change process, and (b) Is there an organizational, decision-making model that can best help schools achieve the changes that are best for the students in a particular school, in a particular district?

To answer the first question, we turn to the seminal work on educational change by Seymour Sarason, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* (Sarason, 1982). This work is grounded solidly in the social systems theories so

familiar to educational administrators (Getzels & Guba, 1957; Getzels &Thelen, 1960). Regarding the efforts to change schools, Sarason states:

> Nothing has been more characteristic of efforts to change schools than oversimple conceptions of the change process, an oversimplicity matched only by (indeed, deriving from) a very narrow conception of what a school system is. (pp. 11-12)

Sarason shows us that our narrow view of school change becomes "encapsulated" in the immediate environment where a change is anticipated, and that we fail to view the "encapsulated school" as part of a larger system, with all of its pieces interrelated, where a change in one area affects all other areas. Sarason provides support for our current focus on outcomes:

> . . . any change in a programmatic regularity has as one of its intended outcomes some kind of change in existing behavioral regularities, and these behavioral regularities are among the most important criteria for judging the degree to which intended outcomes are being achieved. (p. 107)

Programmatic regularities and behavioral regularities exist to produce desired school outcomes. However, Sarason shows that, in practice, the school culture of existing programmatic and behavioral regularities are so difficult to change that we have all become aware that "the more things change the more they remain the same" (p. 58). He speaks to the evaluation of outcomes:

> Conspicuous by its absence in the school culture, or so low in priority as to be virtually absent, is evaluation of the regularities. . . . We hear much talk today about "accountability," which reduces to achievement test performance of pupils. . . . I in no way downplay the importance of achievement. . . it is at the expense of recognizing the significance (fiscal and psychological) of behavioral and programmatic regularities in the school culture. (p. 116-117)

He eloquently shows the need for the change process to examine the inter-relatedness of instructional and organizational norms when changing desired outcomes. The NSSE model of OBE evaluation seems to do this very well by evaluating both instructional and organizational norms (or regularities) in terms of their support of desired outcomes.

To answer the second question concerning an organizational, decision-making model that can best help schools change, we submit that Total Quality Management (TQM) is the current "best practice" available. TQM takes a "systems" view of organizational change which addresses some of Sarason's criticisms of the modal process of change in schools. TQM is more than a management process, it is a philosophy of organizational leadership that uses the scientific method and the contributions of everyone in the organization to continuously improve everything the

organization does to consistently meet or exceed its stakeholders' needs. The system in this case refers to those elements that impact on the organization in question. For example, TQM in an elementary school would involve not only the students, facility, staff, and parents of that school, but also other educational institutions, government, and businesses at the local level, and even at state, regional, and national levels. TQM identifies those stakeholders and attempts to understand the cultures involved, the attitudes of the stakeholders toward changes in the behavioral regularities, and uses this information to establish outcomes that address stakeholders' needs. TQM does this by implementing the four philosophical beliefs, which comprise the "Profound Knowledge" necessary for a system to improve, as expressed by its creator, W. Edwards Deming (Deming, 1989; Rhodes, 1990):

1. Psychological Belief: People are purposeful, cognitive beings with an intrinsic desire to learn and be innovative. Each individual has the right to enjoy his or her work and be successful. The emphasis in this belief is on human resources.
2. Systems Belief: All organizations should be viewed as systems whose activities must be aimed at fulfilling the mission of the organization. The task of management is to optimize the whole. The emphasis here is on the dynamic character of organizations.
3. Perceptual Framework Belief: Knowledge is constructed from experience bound within a framework of theories and beliefs. Everyone within the organization needs the same theoretical roadmap. The emphasis in this belief is on alignment of goals.
4. Causes of Variation Belief: 80% to 90% of the variation from expected outcomes is a result of problems within the system or process, not the worker. To lessen the occurrence of variation, the system programmatic and behavioral regularities must be modified. The emphasis here is on the scientific method and data collection.

Within this philosophy, there is room for various management/leadership structures, however, participatory leadership is required. School-based decision making (SBDM) fits very nicely in this framework, and TQM will provide the wavering school site councils with the tools necessary to get the job done. Decision-making in TQM organizations is based on data, not hunches, and it provides tools necessary to collect and make decisions. Other core values of TQM relate to empowerment, teamwork, long-range and strategic planning, and accountability. These are all concepts that most educators and certainly the literature on school administration and change support.

To support the idea that TQM can be used as the model of school organization to best address the OBE evaluation model as outlined by the NSSE, Table 1 depicts how the two are related.[1]

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[1] For a similar analysis of the relationship among effective schools, outcomes-based education and total quality management, readers are referred to a paper by Richard Rossmiller and Edie Holcomb (1993).

Table 1. A Side-by-Side Comparison of the Steps for the NSSE, OBE Model for School Evaluation and TQM Concepts.

NSSE	TQM
1. Developing Student Growth through Development of Student/Community Profile.	1. Identification of the System and the Stakeholders within it.
2. Formulation of Beliefs and Development of the School Mission.	2. Development of a Mission and Vision for the Organization.
3. Identification of Desired Learner Outcomes.	3. Identification of Stakeholders' Needs in Terms of Mission and Vision.
4. Analysis of Student Performance.	4. Data Collection and Analysis.
5. Analysis of Instructional and Organizational Practices as Related to Outcomes.	5. Continuous Improvement. "How are we doing and what can we do better?"
6. Development of School Improvement Plan (SIP).	6. Development of a Strategic Quality Plan (SQP) that Focuses on the Stakeholders' Needs.
7. Implementing the SIP and Documenting Student Growth.	7. Implement the SQP and Evaluate Student Performance.

As indicated in the table, there is a direct match of steps in the NSSE outcomes-based model and TQM concepts. Implicit in both the NSSE and TQM models is that they are both continuous—i.e., when item number seven is completed, they loop back to item number one and begin the process again. A school that uses TQM as its philosophical and organizational framework, is already poised to implement an outcomes-based education model to develop an effective school. TQM focuses on the entire "system", ensuring that all of the stakeholders' needs are considered. By focusing on the system in this manner, any effort to change programmatic and behavioral regularities will more likely succeed. TQM can provide the organizational framework within which to implement the NSSE model, for it has the necessary philosophical framework to provide sustained direction—that is, it has the "Profound Knowledge."

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